

Malaika Adero:

Well, they're responsible for feeding that spark at the interest I had publicly. You have gorgeous eyes.

Speaker 1:

Oh thank you, I appreciate it. Wonderful. Yeah, I also did a little research, I was watching your talk at the Island Book Fest.

Malaika Adero:

Oh my goodness on the sea spin?

Speaker 1:

Yes. It was a moment when you said something that oh... I think tears came to my eyes when I heard it. But you said, I work in an industry where you were saying you just have a rather a good job and you are really fortunate, but it's a tough industry. Like they will take everything from you that they can sometimes without even knowing what all you can offer. And I was like, whoa [inaudible 00:00:47] So I will probably ask.

Malaika Adero:

Oh God I said that... You want to make sure we have the little napkins over there, close to somebody? Yeah. I didn't plan on crying and looking ugly on it but...

Speaker 2:

You are alright wherever you are.

Speaker 1:

Okay. Yes, I'll just read like a brief statement at the beginning. So first thank you so much for participating in this effort, coming to DC and putting timing, maybe timing your schedule. I really appreciate it. And every interview I've done has been really rich and wonderful. And I know this one will be equally so-

Malaika Adero:

Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate being here.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Wonderful. So the goal of this questionnaire is to produce as detailed and coherent narrative of your story as possible. So invited this, I encourage you to feel free to just, don't worry about providing an answer that's too long, but say as much as you need to say, if you need to stop and take breaks, let me know if there are things you want to sort of chip away from that's totally fine.

Malaika Adero:

Okay.

Speaker 1:

Any questions at all before I begin?

Malaika Adero:

No, I will just...

Speaker 1:

So the first part of the first part is just going to be just a little bit about your early life. Tell me about your place of birth and what was going on there. If you have, as you were growing up.

Malaika Adero:

Well, I was born in 1957 in Knoxville, Tennessee. And so I'm born in the civil rights movement era. I had the good fortune of growing up in what would now be called a historically black community in Knoxville. And what that meant was we not only had a long history in this community, my family, my great-great-grandfather first bought in this community in the 1870s. And there was a school founded, of course, that was era of segregation. There was a school founded for that community. It was called Lyons View. And that school was Lyons View School, which was next door to one of the two major churches in our community. Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, and adjacent to the church was the cemetery where my great-great-grandparents and their children were buried. In the residential community the cluster of 60 houses in Lyons View, there was a community center and a playground.

So we had our major institutions, school, church, cemetery, recreation center. So that was a very nourishing and affirming environment for me as a black kid, our school was closed down in 1964. I think it was so that they could finally integrate the schools board Brown vs Board of Education, 1954, but it took them another decade to actually get it done so I was in the last class of Lyons View School, the historically black school, and then went to... which meant I was the first class to integrate what was the predominantly white public schools in that time. So I grew up in the civil rights era.

Speaker 1:

So I spoke to Liz Ruma maybe last week or the week before. And she mentioned that you were a part of a very small cultural group in Appalachia, starts with an M, am I getting that right?

Malaika Adero:

Oh, Oh the Melungeons?

Speaker 1:

Yes.

Malaika Adero:

That's my father's people, this community, I am... My family name is Crump and the great-great-grandparents who settled in Lyons View were Grunty Crump and Texana Alexander Crump. And they were the last generation in my family born into slavery. Now on my father's side of the family, his the great-great-grandmother on that side was a Melungeon. And that it's obscured term that people in Southern Appalachia are familiar with. And it's their term for mixed people, essentially being from Louisiana you understand that whole thing, well, our language is Melungeon and for... and they've been the subject of scholars for a long time, a small group of scholars. And there's been a lot of debate about who Melungeons were, many wanted to believe they were Portuguese that descendants to the Portuguese, some descendants of native Americans, what made them a marginal group of people and an ostracized group of people is their African ancestry, but they wanted to be everything but African.

And part of the story of Melungeons is that in some places in times they were legally white and in some places in times, legally black. So Lucinda Collins, who is my great-great-grandmother was one of those people. And they tended to live high up in the mountains, the Cumberland gap, Morristown, Tennessee, up in the Eastern part of Tennessee, they were associated with making whiskey. That was one of the things they were associated with silver smithing also in their history, which became counterfeiting. So there's a little bit of scandal associated with them. And recent times now that we have DNA research and can confirm through science, on genealogy, the story is that Melungeons are the descendants of African and European indentured servants. So they look the ranges they can be dark skin, sharp, featured straightish hair. You could be a part of my family bare skin blue eyes, but round African features all like that. So I am part of Melungeon.

Speaker 1:

That's interesting, I had never heard of that group of course you mentioned it. [inaudible 00:07:52]

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, if you Google, you'll see. And it's like, Oh, and they're books written about Melungeons. Brent Kennedy, is a scholar who's been an important writer on the subject of more men's rise to altar has written a lot about them. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

So did you grow up with grandparents? Did you- [crosstalk 00:08:15]

Malaika Adero:

Absolutely. I was raised in the household... My maternal grandparents household. My great-grandmother also lived there. My grandfather's Olympias was very much extended multi-generational household beer in Lyons View and Knoxville, Tennessee.

Speaker 1:

What was that like? I know, I maybe even in the Highland book Fest top, you talked about sort of growing up among storytellers that your grandparents told you, stories of your parents make it, that you made material, or there was a storyteller, but what was it like growing up-

Malaika Adero:

Well, who that was said the main storyteller in the family was great-grandmother. Her name was Allie Rucker. And because the house wasn't that big and there were many people and living in the house as a baby and toddler, I was put in the bed with her. So she would tell me stories to settle me down to sleep at night. And she told me Br'er rabbit and tar baby stories with such authority that I grew up thinking she made them up. I didn't know, you know about that. It was a part of folklore and Joel Chandler Harris had, was known for collecting these stories and documenting them. I thought my great-great-grandmother made them out. She also told me stories about hog killing time. How you'd I can tell you all about after the first frost when they slaughter the pigs and what they do with the pigs and all that.

So she was the number one storyteller, but people in my family really held education and literature and art high and encouraged us to read and to play music and crafts and dancing and paint. One of my great-grandfather is in fact, the same storytelling, great-grandmother, her, her husband was a dancer. He was a buck dancer. He at fairs and carnivals, he traveled around that's part of how he made

his living, but he was very talented. But according to her, he wasn't a good provider. So by the time we get to my generation, you're encouraged to practice art, but not to expect to make a living from it.

Speaker 1:

Well, that leads me into my next question. What were your parents and grandparents dreams for you growing up? Did they want you to delve into a specific profession or?

Malaika Adero:

Well, my mother born in 1940 was in a sixties person. She was more progressive and she really wanted for me, whatever I wanted for myself, but my father, my grandparents they thought more in a more traditional way about career paths. So of course a teacher they would think be a teacher. And then I was told very young that I was argumentative, said I should be a lawyer. And actually I thought I might go to law school. When I did get to college, although, I made another decision after I learned a few things, but they thought more of the traditional career paths for women and black women. And again, it was education but mostly they wanted me... They didn't push hard in any direction other than get your education, get a good job with benefits and raise a family.

Speaker 1:

Did you have siblings?

Malaika Adero:

I do have siblings. I have three sisters and two brothers. I'm the eldest of those. I also, I have step-parents. My parents... I'm the only child and my parents' union. They had me together pretty young and then they married other people. So I have two brothers and two sisters from my mother and a sister from my father. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Did you, so did you grow up with the brothers and sisters?

Malaika Adero:

I grew up with all of them, my by youngest sibling, however, I'm 14 years older than her. So I babysat her as well, but no, we grew up together. There was no distinction really in that other than my, one of my sisters actually would call my father, uncle daddy that was just her way of framing, who he was, but we grew up together. And then just a year two year, couple of years apart.

Speaker 1:

Did you sell, you talked a lot about the community did you, what did you and your sibling what did you play with your siblings or did you play with other children in the neighborhood of ethics or both? And if so, what did you do? What kinds of games?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, well, we did live apart in the same city for a while because me being that, the first child of my mom, we lived initially with my grandparents. And so when she remarried and or when she married, she and the other children lived in a different part of town sometimes, and I would go back and forth. When you're a kid, a couple of years can make a big difference. So I played with them, but I'd play more with

my peers in the neighborhood. And it was a close neighborhood and cousins. I mean, we had cousins first cousins all around down the street around the corner, that hundred things. So, yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

Beautiful. What kinds of things did you like to get into as a child or you're argumentative, but...

Malaika Adero:

I like to make things it was, if we had, we had a lot of freedom and East Tennessee versus Cirrus there was just so much space. One of the places, the first house I grew up in, we actually didn't have neighbors directly. We were the only house on a particular side of a Lake. And then later on, we moved up into the neighborhood, but we had freedom to ride our bikes for miles. And I'm playing games, playing sports. I like to, to read, I like to make things really television air. So we were the first generation to begin to be addicted to television and again, it was the civil rights movement and the black arts movement and the black power movement. So it was a very rich time in terms of film and books and dance and music so that was very important to us.

Plus my mother was a musician as well. My mother's a pianist, she was a pianist and my uncle sang and I had another uncle who played saxophone. And so we have a lot of artists and a lot of frustrated artist, and the family, because again, you're encouraged to learn it and practice it, but not necessarily to believe that you can have a career of it.

Speaker 1:

And so did you have legs? You mentioned film and music and did you have like a favorite musician or a favorite film from your childhood or something to sort of transform with you?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, many actually my, again, being in, in a extended household and multi-generational household, I had the benefit of being nosy really into the lives of my uncles and older cousins. So that my introduction to James Baldwin was right there in the house. The books that were coming out in the black power air, George Jackson Angela Davis was our hero. I was reading The Black Panther Paper as a kid, it was being distributed in our neighborhood.

Speaker 1:

Newspaper or a newsletter?

Malaika Adero:

The Black Panther Newspaper.

Speaker 1:

Oh!

Malaika Adero:

Yeah. The black Panther. Yeah, and one of my homes away from homes, aside from the public library was a bookshop called Black World Books And Things. And that's where I discovered Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Danielle Lee, who's now [Haki Malibludi 00:17:30] all these writers, Amiri Baraka, Leroy

Jones, [inaudible 00:17:36] people lived in that store and, and the music I heard it was everything for my hearing. From my mom, it was Sam Cooke from my father, Nancy Wilson, Wes Montgomery. I still have my father's copy of Miles Davis' Kind of Blue. So this was all from home playing around.

I fell in love with traditional African music in that way too. There was something called the Columbia Music Club where you would sign up. It's like the book club we'd sign up and you get four bonus albums at that time, vinyl, and then you subscribe and you get new releases. And that's how I discovered Babatunde Olatunji's Drums Of Passion, which was the first traditional African recording that became a big hit in the mainstream. So it was a wide range. It was jazz. It was RMB Motown of course, one of the other wonderful cultural things that happened to Knoxville was James Brown bought a radio station in Knoxville, WJBE he owned several radio stations, I think one in Baltimore, one in Augusta, one in Knoxville. And so that was great music all the time. And he performed a lot and all but sly and the family stone that was it was, and of course, sacred music because my mother played in church. My, my uncle did a lot of my church experience was around music. So this, the sacred and the secular music.

Speaker 1:

So Mount Pleasant was, Oh, it was a Baptist Church.

Malaika Adero:

And in our other church was Wallace Chapel, African Methodist, Episcopal Church. So I'm an AME kid too. And actually that was in church that I was, had more of an emotional connection to, but I joined the Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant as a teenager because that's where my friends, a lot of my friends were in the choir and I wanted to be able to hang out with them. So...

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:20:16] So I'm going to ask you a couple of questions about school before we move on. You did say you went to the black school, you went to black school for a while, and then by 1964, they started integrating...

Malaika Adero:

It's. Yeah, I was at Lyons View School in all black neighborhood school until fourth grade. And then we were obliged to go to the particular schools, Bearden Elementary, Bearden Elementary Bearden Junior High and Bearden High School, where we then became 1% of the population. There were about 1300 kids, about 1200 kids in the school and 13 black kids. So that was, that was elementary, junior high and high school and shocking.

Speaker 1:

Wow. Yes. If you want to talk about it, what was that like?

Malaika Adero:

It was in one way it was exciting for me because one, I loved school as a kid and I was curious I'd grown up at first in a house where he had... didn't have neighbors. So while I had a big family, I did spend a lot of time alone. Then we move it into the neighborhood and I'm able to hang out with more kids. So the opportunity to be in a white school initially again, I was excited about it, but slowly that excitement was more in a way, by the reality of the interactions that I was having with kids. I was accustomed to teachers being very supportive and nurturing and even pushing you. But, and this new school, I didn't

get pushed in the same kind of positive ways. The expectations of me were lower. And when I did well, it was, I attracted attention, but it didn't seem to be a supportive intention. They were always surprised when I did well, that kind of thing. And then the kids you feel isolated.

One of the worst aspects of integration to me is isolation that black kids have felt going to these schools a lot happens to you that you don't talk to your parents about, you don't even talk that much to your other friends about, even though you all are, are experiencing similar things. You just get through the day and grateful that you could go home to your neighborhood where you can be yourself and appreciated as such.

Speaker 1:

So let me shift to a couple of questions about activism. When was the first time you were consciously aware of issues concerning race?

Malaika Adero:

I can't remember when I was not conscious of issues around race, actually, just because the conversation in my household, my uncle, the singer, he was also involved in theater, was the first person to take me to a political demonstration. There was a man in Knoxville who was a politician and a businessman who wielded a lot of power there. His name was Cas Walker, and he was notorious for not... He had a chain of grocery stores, so that was one of his businesses. And there were lots of complaints about the way his stores were managed and the black community. So that first demonstration was there it was very exciting to me to see all that. So-

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 00:24:46].

Malaika Adero:

Oh my goodness. It's hard to remember that. I was probably nine, something like that. I was probably around nine years old.

And then by junior high school, I was involved as a student in the antiwar activities. We were sitting in, in junior high school, even in my predominantly white school, we were sitting in to demonstrate our opposition to the Vietnam War, so there was a lot of that. Black World Books And Things, this bookshop was one major center of activism in Knoxville. And so I was one of the kids who hung out in that store and went to rallies and brought along when they were... had a campaign petitioning to change the name of college and university avenues to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King avenues. This was incidentally in Mechanicsville, one of the oldest black communities in Knoxville. And where Knoxville College is located historically black college. So yeah, there was a lot going on.

Speaker 1:

And so you mentioned that there was an anti-war, there were anti-war demonstrations for you in junior high. Was that a moment when black kids and white kids, demonstrated together?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, but they weren't, it would be me or because we, there were so few of us I only ever had in Bearden School the most I ever had, maybe there might've been a class where there were three of us, but usually it was either one or two. So there was the me and somebody else.

Speaker 1:

I see. Wait, is there a moment for you where you realized that you wanted to change things or that you... Was there a moment before you started say anti-war protesting where you just felt like I can enact some change?

Malaika Adero:

I didn't think I could enact some change. I didn't, didn't see myself as having power in that way or being empowered in that way. But when I did come to believe early on as a kid, at least by age 11, that writers were very powerful. Writers for us were iconic in that year. When you're talking about Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez, Barak LeRoi Jones AKA Amiri Baraka. These were the people who were influencing things. Again that The Black Panther Paper the writers in that, the leadership of that Angela Davis, his case helped to radicalize me as it were. So I did begin to believe that if I became a writer that I would have a voice and could therefore influence things.

Speaker 1:

Where did you go to college?

Malaika Adero:

I went to Clark College. Yeah. And I, and Bearden High School. I didn't go to my senior year. By the time I got to junior high, I loved school before, but by the time I got to junior high, I was starting to hate school or the school I was in. And I promised myself that I would, when I discovered, well, I knew about Knoxville College. And then I learned about other black college. And I promised myself that I would only go to a predominantly black college. So I went to the guidance counselor's office at Bearden High School, and just dug in the files and read these profiles, these briefs on various schools and found as many black colleges as I could and read up on those. I was clueless as to how to apply for college. And my mother was too, but she found somebody and she found it was a local dentist in town who was a member of the Tuskegee Institute Alumni Association. And she brought him to the house and he sat down and he walked us through the application process.

And so I was therefore obliged to apply to Tuskegee because of his association. But I had decided otherwise to apply to Howard University and to Clark. And I ended up at Clark because they were the only one that offered me money. And that was necessary for me to go to school at all, because my folks were not in a position to pay for school.

Speaker 1:

What did you major in?

Malaika Adero:

I majored in social sciences by that time I'm hearing my father and my grandfather. And I think that I might go to law school, but I really wanted to be a creative. I wanted to write and really wanted to write, paint, sculpt, all this kind of thing.

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:31:04]

Malaika Adero:

Really wanted to write paint, sculpt, all this kind of thing, but in dance and afraid to really say what I really wanted to do. But I majored in social sciences and minored in communications.

Speaker 1:

What was the experience like? Did you enjoy those classes?

Malaika Adero:

When I got to Atlanta and I saw those black people everywhere, working everywhere, I was in heaven. At age 11, 12, I made my first trip away from home without my family. I had two girlfriends who were from Anniston, Alabama, and they invited me over there for Easter. It was Easter break. I took a bus from Knoxville to Anniston Alabama, and we had a layover in Atlanta. I remember just looking and just seeing black people everywhere and working everywhere. That's the reason why I applied to Clark. So when I got down there, my grades, I went from being a B student to a straight A student and I partied as hard as I studied. I was having a ball.

Speaker 1:

What were some of the things you did socially?

Malaika Adero:

Well, it was party central in the AU center. 10,000 black students from all over the country, what else would we do but dance and cut up and hang out and play. I'd worked on a literary journal in high school and began writing poetry and publishing poetry and dabbling and editing, trying to figure out what that was. So by the time I get into college, I'd get to know circles and start reading poetry. This was pre slam era. We were performing and I got a group, People's Revolutionary Art Ensemble.

It was in my second year, the other thing that happened, when I'd go to the AU center, that's where I began to meet some of these writers that I had admired and already read in print. Clark college had a writers conference every spring. Gwendolyn Brooks, I met her, I touched her, I heard her. She talked to us and encouraged us. Toni Cade Bambara, *The Black Woman Anthology*, in Knoxville, by the time I'm a senior in high school, that was my Bible. The text for other young women, friends of mine, to hear someone talk like that about women and women having agency and being revolutionaries and all this kind of thing. That's where I met Toni, who became a mentor and friend, and a very important person, and really one of the most influential writers in my life, in my personal and professional life. But gosh, so many people, we saw at the Clark Writers conference.

Speaker 1:

A quick question about Toni Cade Bambara, your relationship with her started in college, when she came to the writers?

Malaika Adero:

Yes.

Speaker 1:

How did you-

Malaika Adero:

She's extremely generous, number one, and she was talking to all of us. We were kind of just sitting at her feet. Then I took a creative writing course with her. It was actually jointly taught by her and Dr. Richard Long, who was another tremendous cultural figure in the black community and the black world. They just turned us inside out in terms of our thinking and how to approach writing. I came to Atlanta in '73. She moved to Atlanta in '74, '75 to live. I was one of a group of writers who sat at her feet, including Nikky Finney, Shay Youngblood, Joyce White. There were a bunch of us. We formed what was called Pamoja Writers Guild. We met once a month in Toni's house for seven years. All kinds of people in town and out of town would be writers came and sat in on that workshop.

Speaker 1:

That's wonderful. Wow. I'll move forward with some questions about IBW, but I might come back and ask you a few more about ... because you were working there while going to college?

Malaika Adero:

I was, uh-huh (affirmative). I was briefly a volunteer there. What it was, when I would walk to school, to Clark, I would pass the Institute of the Black World. I saw that logo. That immediately drew me. It was like, "Well, what is that? What is this about?" I remember mentioning it around school. One of my professors, I think it was Dr. Isabella Finkelstein actually, made possible the direct connection. So I started volunteering there. Then that became a work study job. Then that evolved into being hired directly by IBW. So that began my sophomore year in school.

Speaker 1:

Yes, because you went to college at 16, so did you do finish early and ...

Malaika Adero:

Mm-huh (affirmative). I went straight through. Yeah, I was 16 as a freshmen and I started at IBW at 17.

Speaker 1:

Who was there when you first started working there?

Malaika Adero:

Well, Howard Dodson was the executive director. Lensa Ruma was there, Jillian Royce, Betty Cheney. These are the editors that I need. That's when I meet my first flesh and blood person who actually did this kind of job. Donahue Edwards was there. [AI Josey 00:07:06] was my first boss at IBW. Then I began to work with Donahue in the production, in the printing, because IBW also was a publisher of monographs and that sort of thing. So I learned how to run a press, actually an AB Dick 360 or whatever it was, printing press, burning plates, type setting, and all that. I learned the fundamentals of publishing production at IBW.

Speaker 1:

So people describe ICW as a place where various philosophies and ideologies sort of converged, included like nationalism, integrationism, very political philosophies. Do you think that the individuals at IBW had competing visions or were you all sort of able to have this common goal? Was it a mixture of goals?

Malaika Adero:

On reflection, I don't see it as competition. I see it as diversity. There wasn't one way of thinking. Now there were ways of thinking that dominated, because there was a conscious selection of individuals to be the voice of IBW. Vincent Harding was kind of the voice of IBW, or the party line, or how you want to see that. Of course, there were other voices, Bill [Strickland 00:08:55]. Of course, Lerone Bennett was associated with IBW. I was a sponge there, young student just soaking all of this up, learning as much as I could.

What I did see then and now was the day to day running of IBW was very much woman centric in my mind, and the leadership was male. So I did see that. As a young person, I didn't have a critique of that. It would just be a feeling about whatever was happening. So that was there. There would be great debates and arguments and I would mostly be just kind of looking back and forth. People there did help to give me confidence.

Speaker 1:

So you were talking about James Brock?

Malaika Adero:

Boggs.

Speaker 1:

Boggs.

Malaika Adero:

What I was saying is that [crosstalk 00:10:16]. Grace, her husband. I was one of the youngest there. So as I said, I was soaking up all of this intelligence, not only from the core staff of IBW onsite in Atlanta, but people that would come in for regular conferences, like Lerone Bennett. I met all sorts of activists who came into town, including James and Grace Boggs. I remember at one particular gathering, this wasn't one of the formal sessions either, but an informal session where they're all there talking and I'm listening. He must've been watching me and he called me out and said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Speak. You have something to say, you have something on your mind, do that. You can raise your voice here too." I really appreciated that and really did need to hear it because I did not weigh in or share a lot at this point because, my goodness, I'm a little girl here in the these intellectual giants and that sort of thing. But there were people there who gave me a push and gave me encouragement and affirmed my voice.

Speaker 1:

So you started as a volunteer. In interviewing some of the women from IBW, some of them were kind of like just got in, like you went and you did whatever. But did you have specific jobs?

Malaika Adero:

I did have specific jobs. They put me in specific jobs. Initially, in the volunteering, it was a lot of folding. This was in a time when we communicated via mail. It was hard copy everything. There were regular mailings going out, mass mailings going out of material and information. So I did that. My first kind of more elevated role again was with Donahue in production, where I'm actually producing the literature, printing the newsletters and monographs, that kind of thing. I also had, for a good while, the job of handling what was our distribution, which was direct mail to solicit subscribers to the newsletter and to

other things that we were doing. So there was a lot of that. We had a bookstore in IBW for a period of time and we not only sold onsite but we sold on location at conferences and conventions, for example, and not just academic ones or intellectual ones, also like the AME Zion convention would come to Atlanta and I would be one of the people manning the booth and selling books onsite.

Speaker 1:

You said you were there ... How long did you work there?

Malaika Adero:

It was about eight or nine years, let's say from '75 until we started kind of closing it down, I think '83, '84, something like that. I left Atlanta in '84. We were wrapping up by then. I also worked on research projects as well. I can't remember the specific scope of projects, but I would be assigned to look up things. At one point, I remember going to the Urban League and they did an annual report of the black nation, so to speak. I did whatever I was told to do. But it was all enriching and interesting to me.

Speaker 1:

Well, talk to me about that. If you were to name some of the things that you got from that experience, any one of them, sort of like the power of being given permission to speak which was a thing you said you needed to hear. Were there other sort of moments where, or just things in general that you think about when you think back to that time that like, oh, that was where I learned to do this, or like that was where I started thinking about this or ...

Malaika Adero:

Mm-huh (affirmative). Yeah, beyond the practical skills of production, it was learning history. It was learning getting a deeper understanding of, for example, Cuba. We had [inaudible 00:46:50] newspaper right there in the office. I doubt that I would've seen that for many years later. To actually read that, to learn how the US-based movements and activists were connected to those in the Caribbean, those in Africa, those in other parts of the world. That's where our first saw, met, heard in the same room as Stokely Carmichael, Louis Farrakhan, Ron Karenga, the presenters who had come to the conferences. I learned so much. Sometimes I would be behind the video cameras as well during those sessions and hearing Eleanor Traylor. She was one of the most dynamic of regular speakers at these conferences, and the woman on these panels. So dynamic.

Toni Cade Bambara had involvement, the era. The first time I ever helped anybody work on a film was her. She made a little ... We had the main house IBW, red brick house there on the corner of Beckwith Street. Then there was another house in back where the press was. For a time, there was a little yard there and there was a garden. Toni used that garden and she was making a little film called, or what we were creating for the film was a victory garden, and I helped her set that up. Those sorts of things.

Everyday, what made it exciting was there was always something new and always something new to learn. I'm passionate about literature and reading. It's endless material to read. It taught me a language for the things that I felt and the opinions that I was forming. It was learning about what critical thinking was beyond what I was getting in school. It was all that.

Speaker 1:

Mm-huh (affirmative). Yeah. Talk to me. So you mentioned Eleanor Traylor, who was often like the only woman on like a panel, but who was a dynamic speaker. You also said a little earlier, at 17, you noticed that there was a sort of gender hierarchy, but you didn't necessarily have language for it. But over time, did you start to see those things, not only at IBW but just in the civil rights movement in general?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, I saw it in the movement even before I got to IBW, even in Knoxville, in that the leadership would be male. I also notice, but never had the courage to ask, there were women activists who were on the scene, who were role models for me, particularly in Knoxville, two or three women. I'd see them there. I'd see the men there. The men were more in leadership, but I didn't see the wives and women of the men in leadership. I always wondered about that but I didn't have the courage to ask. So yeah, I did notice a gender difference. By now, by the time I get to IBW, I've read The Black Woman Anthology. I've read some womanist analysis of the movement, that kind of thing. IBW went into [inaudible 00:51:17] emerges with The Colored Girls, Michelle Wallace, her writing and analysis. I was beginning to form, I guess you'd say more sophisticated thoughts and ideas about what that was about and what that would mean for me.

Speaker 1:

Wonderful. Did the women who work there when you worked there, there talk about these things?

Malaika Adero:

Yes.

Speaker 1:

Do you remember [inaudible 00:51:51]?

Malaika Adero:

I'd have to think about that in detail because these people quickly became my family and friends. It wasn't just a work situation or an activist situation. This was day to day in these people's kitchens, sharing all aspects of life, even living with them for periods of time. I lived in [Lynn's 00:52:25] home. This was after college for a period of time. So yeah, there are interpersonal relationships. People had personal relationships inside of there. But me being young, I wasn't privy to a lot and I didn't necessarily understand a lot, some things you do. But I was also, being young, caught up in my own social scene and trying to figure out how to be a woman, be a person in the world. I'd been going to them asking them about things that are relevant to my personal life, in that sphere among my peers. I was self-absorbed as a teenager, focused on my own stuff, you know what I mean? I knew things vaguely and in general, but not necessarily specifics.

Speaker 1:

I want to bounce back to a question that I had when you were talking about learning about Cuba and learning about sort of like how the movement manifested itself in different places [crosstalk 00:53:46]. Did working at IBW expand your notion of diaspora, like what that meant? I think about myself. Just before college, I couldn't have articulated what diaspora was, or maybe even that there was one. I thought of myself as very different from say a Haitian person living in Haiti. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah. Beginning in Knoxville as a child and going to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the first connection I made to life, or black people, or myself outside of America is that word, African. That to me, that was us. I didn't know what that meant as a little kid, but it meant something. So as I grow and learn, and by the time I get to IBW, yeah, I'm learning in more specific ways what solidarity of one movement to another in another geographical location is all about. People at IBW were involved with [inaudible 00:55:05] Brigade, and had traveled to Cuba and I was hearing what that was about, their experience. There was harassment of IBW because of people's relationship to Cuba. I was working there in the days where we had to decide if we were going to come to work or not come to work because there had been specific threats made. People got sugar in their gas tank or paint thrown on their door, that kind of thing, like, that happens.

I learned what the term Cusano meant. Then meeting people from places. I knew many countries in Africa. I learned that in my education. But actually meeting people from these various places and learning about new places. Toni Cade Bambara went to Vietnam, and talked about that and wrote about that. Vietnam was, generationally speaking, I guess, my war. That was the war of my era. So I was very curious about that. People in my family had served in Vietnam so I was very aware that was one of the first non-American places that I became aware of. Even though it's foreign, we're connected to that. That has some meaning, oppressed people, and all this sort of thing. So yeah, it expanded my awareness tremendously.

Speaker 1:

You may have answered this already. I know that you, with the other women who worked at IBW, you'd sort of go to them about issues of your own life, ask them for advice. Did you spend time with them together? I know you've lived in [inaudible 00:57:02] house but were there things that all of you did in the group outside IBW? Did you go out together or do things recreationally?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, we were at IBW and people connected to it, we had community centered around the IBW. Again, the people who worked there in the day to day and the people who would come in and out, and then the people associated with them by blood and by heart. So we were in and out of each other's households for meals, for conversation, for just hanging out. Faye Bellamy was someone I spent a lot of just personal time with, and who helped me in enormous ways in every aspect of life, sharing and teaching and just being with each other and around each other. So, yeah, we were very much a community.

Speaker 1:

How did the leadership change while you were there? Because you were there for a long time, and if I'm remembering correctly, Pat [Daly 00:58:20] was the person who kind of shut down IBW.

Malaika Adero:

She did, because Howard had moved on to New York and to the Schomburg. I moved to New York soon after that, not not connected to him at all directly, so all of that. But I was one of the people working with Pat to do that. I mean, literally packing up boxes and files and deciding what to do with this, that and the other. Yeah. The intellectual leadership didn't shift while I was there. It was still Vincent Harding, Bill Strickland, Howard. But what was happening with the organization? One of the issues that was

raised about IBW at a certain point was, one of the questions was should we be an activist organization only or become a publishing house? I remember I was very much inclined. I wanted the publishing thing by then. So I would have been very happy if we had decided to formally organize a press. But not divorcing ourselves from the activist aspect. But I remember that being an issue.

Bobby Hill, who was an important intellectual contributor to Institute of the Black World. I remember Bobby liking the idea of us formalizing the publishing thing. But I didn't say too much about it, actually, but that was one of the issues. So those kinds of things, conversations, were being had as we were making a transition to be something else, because times had changed, funding had changed, a lot of things had changed.

Speaker 1:

What was it like shutting down or helping [inaudible 01:00:51]?

Malaika Adero:

Interesting. There's always been a nostalgia attached to something like that, with the all shifts in transitions. But I did understand that people had their own individual paths and didn't necessarily need to stay there in the same place. I certainly did. I'm out of college by now. I've got to figure something out. I have to eat. Who am I? What am I? That kind of thing. I decided to pursue publishing major, a job in the publishing industry at a major company as a way of learning. How I saw it, that was another level of graduate study for me because once I earned my undergraduate degree at Clark, I had literally a dozen jobs, all kinds of ...

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [01:02:04]

Malaika Adero:

I had literally a dozen jobs. All kinds of ridiculous, and nice, and otherwise jobs. Just hopping from job to job. And I was getting very frustrated with that. None of them were career-tracked.

Speaker 1:

Was this why you were still in Atlanta?

Malaika Adero:

This is why I was still in Atlanta. And I remember whining in a former professor's office, and she says, "Well, why don't you... They have money at Atlanta University Library School. Just go around there and get you some." And I did. So I enrolled in the Masters in Library and Information Studies Department at AU and that's where I learned about these publishing institutes that people went to. University of Colorado at Denver, The Radcliffe Program, and Howard was inaugurating one. Charles Harris, who founded Howard University Press, also founded Howard University Book Publishing Institute. So I went off to do that. It was a six week certificate program here in 1980. And from that, I got my first corporate job in publishing to use all that I had learned at IBW, and then at Howard.

Speaker 1:

Did you finish the masters at AU?

Malaika Adero:

I did, but I dropped out to do the Howard program, and then had to go back and complete the coursework on that.

Speaker 1:

I would love to talk more about that, particularly just that section called life after IBW. But before we wrap up the discussion about IBW itself, I want to ask about its mission. So just doing the very preliminary research on the Institute, it talks about sort of some of its goals, the black think tank. The first black think tank, and one that was supposed to sort of marry the intellectual and the activist sides of the civil rights movement. Also establishing black studies as a discipline in predominantly white institutions. Do you feel like, as you understood the goals of IBW, do you feel like it fulfilled its mission?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, I think so. To significant measure, and particularly with the Black studies movement. I still have some mirror document, it's addition of curricula that was produced out of IBW. So yes, I think it had an impact. It had an influence. Yeah. To that degree, I do think that it served a mission.

Speaker 1:

Do you feel like that was one of its greatest accomplishments, was the work on black studies or do you feel like there were other equally important things?

Malaika Adero:

That might be, I've never thought of that. It's a good question. I don't think anything was any more important than that because I think that's just foundational to impact education in that way. And the whole notion of education for liberation, which was one of our phrases, that kind of thing is something that I believe was not only relevant and necessary, then it is now, and there are many aspects of the IBW work that need to be reactivated in some way. I mean, you can't go back and recreate an IBW necessarily, but we need to revisit those concepts and ideas that were put forth then because they still apply.

Speaker 1:

Absolutely. What are some of those concepts? So if you sort of nutshell, which ones do you think are most desperately needed right now?

Malaika Adero:

Well, once the importance of history, the importance of knowing what is happening so that you can make sense of what's happened before so that you can make sense of now. In large part, this is a very confusing time obviously, but it helps if you understand what it was like in the post-Reconstruction era. I mean, for me, and this is simplifying matters, but Barack Obama was Reconstruction 2.0, and now we're in post-Reconstruction 2.0.

Speaker 1:

I'm not sure that I thought about it that way, but I think you're absolutely right. It was the terror of things that black people were able to do during reconstruction [crosstalk 01:07:32] backlash of that. That is so true.

Malaika Adero:

You know what Lauren Bennett did with before the Mayflower also taking the work of scholars, historians, and translating it for the people, the people's history. And that's an area where maybe we could have done more work at IBW, is bringing some of these kind of sophisticated, elevated theories and ideas and critiques and analysis to better deliver that in the language of the people.

Speaker 1:

I think just the ways in which people talk about the current moment, and sometimes it's clear that they have no sense of history.

Malaika Adero:

Right.

Speaker 1:

Of what lands were stolen, what things were done to people beforehand. And so they're sort of talking about these current issues without any real sense of what's happened before and how that's impacted. Yeah, absolutely. Hmm.

So we may get to this a little further on, but what other ways? So after you left IBW as it was closing down, what other ways have you been involved in your community since being there?

Malaika Adero:

Hmm, that's a good question. Well, once I get into, I leave and moved to New York, that's when I, well, I didn't have a job when I went to New York, I just kind of made the leap. And one of the people who helped me make that leap was Toni Cade Bambara, who literally one day, not totally out of the blue, because we been having ongoing conversations stop by and say, yeah, you need to go to New York. And she had a written list of people I needed to connect with while I'm there. My community while I'm there. There was, for example, Cheryl Green at Essence magazine, make sure you connect with her on that to people in the dance community because it had involvement in dance for a long time. And she also sent me to John Oliver Killens as an activist and a literary figure.

So my first group of people who I didn't already know were centered around John Oliver Killens, and that was a writer's group. So I go from Toni Cade Bambara's for mojo writer skill to the John Killens writers workshop, which again was about literature, but also about activism because art and politics are one. So John had us involved in various things, whatever campaign was going on in the New York scene. But I really for the next, I don't know, half dozen years or so, I'm just trying to figure out this corporate publishing, corporate life. To me, it was full circle as coming back to Beard in school, back to a predominantly white environment. I had been in this black world, this black bubble of Atlanta and IBW. So I'm back thrown into the cold ocean of being in the minority, so I was trying to navigate that and missing and, and feeling in some ways, honestly, a little negligent after a while the urge to be an activist. New York is a whole other scene, that kind of thing.

So decades later, I've been in New York now for 33 years. My profession and my activism have come together in community projects, bringing the literature to the people. I even produced and developed a book fair that was multi-disciplinary. It was called the Up South International Book Festival. And because I have an activist bent, I'm bringing in people. I mean, one of the earliest people featured at my event was Amiri Baraka, one of my early supporters and godfathers. That's when I develop a relationship, personal relationship with Baraka is being in New York. Ruby Dee was one of the first big

stars. I mean, who gets Ruby Dee at your first festival, but it's because she was an activist. She was beyond being just a star. So I'm in that, I'm immersed in that community now.

So again, the activism does come back, but I don't see myself and what I've done in the last couple of decades as being centered around activism. I wish that it had, I wish I'd found a way to do that, but I didn't know how to do that and hold down a job and support myself. How I can come close to it is publishing these people, working with these people in that way, but direct activism? No. I aspire to that again in my life doing more and more. At this stage I'm no longer corporate, I'm working as an independent. I have the opportunity to do more now, but I can't say I was an activist after IBW.

Speaker 1:

But now you get to pick your projects.

Malaika Adero:

Well, yes I can. But one of the bits of wisdom that was laid on us at IBW at some point, and I can't remember who it was, used to remind us that your job is not your cause. It's a little dangerous when your job is activism because are you in it to pay your rent? Or are you in it because your heart is there? Surely it overlaps, but it can sometimes come into conflict. Sometimes your material needs can clash with your role as a social change agent. There was the critique of some people of other people that, Oh, I thought they were a revolutionary, but what they really just wanted was a good job. That sort of thing. So I heard that.

So even though I was able to publish activists, publish work that spoke truth to power that didn't mean I was an activist. That meant I was an employee of the Amistad Press, Simon and Schuster Publishing, Addison Wesley publishing. Which isn't a negative thing, but is the truth. An editor for a company is not an activist. Just because I worked for, let's say, if I were working for feminist press, doesn't mean I'm a feminist, does not mean I'm an activist. It means I have a job.

Speaker 1:

That is really good. (laughter) That's real. So tell me how you got into publishing. I've heard little bits of this from our previous conversation, but I remember you were saying that Fay Bellamy was... Was it Fay Bellamy that was instrumental in that moment? Was she got you the job at the law firm?

Malaika Adero:

Actually who and what got me into publishing was Howard University Book Publishing Institute. What Fay did was get me a job at a law firm where she worked called Franklin and Axam that was the center of many things, politics and culture. David Franklin, one of the principal partners in that firm is the power behind politicians in Atlanta. I mean, he is a part of that crew that made it possible for Maynard Jackson to be mayor of Atlanta, who's managed political careers. Martin Luther King, Jr., Michael Lomax, all sorts of people. He also, working in that firm, put me into contact with people. See, the publishing connection is when I worked for Franklin and Axam is where I meet people who indirectly and directly help my career later on, like David represented a lot of entertainers, Donny Hathaway, Richard Pryor, Roberta Flack, Cicely Tyson. Cicely Tyson led to him managing Miles Davis. He represented [inaudible 01:18:52]

So when I get in publishing in New York, and I'm an editorial assistant. The only black girl running around, I'm working there a year and people still thinking I'm a temp. So David Franklin, whose administrative assistant was Fay Bellamy, comes to me and says, Look, Miles wants to publish his

autobiography. I will give you an exclusive, this was in the Spring. He says, I'm going to shop it around to publishers in the Fall, but if you like, I'll give you an exclusive now, if you can get us a deal. Well, who would pass that up? I'm an editorial assistant sitting outside my boss's office, typing and filing and all that kind of thing, and I go in and I'm able to say, Can we do a book with Miles Davis? And they're like, Well how do you know Miles Davis? And can you deliver him to a meeting?

It's David Franklin who delivers Miles. And that book is responsible for me getting my first significant promotion and people literally saying, Oh, I thought you were just a temp, or, Oh, you can walk and chew gum at the same time. Literally, that kind of thing. So in IBW, a woman of IBW led me to key people with whom I worked and learned also about writing and about business and everything else who leads me to signing up one of the most successful books in my entire career up to now. So, yeah.

Speaker 1:

Okay. And was this in Simon and Schuster?

Malaika Adero:

At Simon and Schuster.

Speaker 1:

And was that your first job in New York, as an editorial assistant?

Malaika Adero:

No, it's my second job in New York. My first job was with a new American library. John Killens was an author there, and I was an assistant for three editors, including one pioneer Black editor there named Carol Hall. And I just burned out in the first year. It was a lot. And then I made a lateral move over to Simon and Schuster to be the editorial assistant of one editor, not three. And that's where David gave me the opportunity to sign Miles. So that book, Miles' autobiography was the first book I signed as an acquisitions. I wasn't an acquisitions editor yet. I was still an assistant, but I brought that book to the company. And then the second author was Spike Lee and did his first four books, but Spike was in the AU Center with me as a student. He was at Morehouse, I was at Clark. Yeah, he had produced our homecoming at Clark.

Speaker 1:

And it feels organic. How does it feel to you?

Malaika Adero:

Good, yeah. That's good. Comfortable.

Speaker 3:

Whenever you're ready.

Speaker 1:

Okay. So you were talking about Spike Lee. You did his four books.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah. He was working on She's Got to Have It, and I saw the rough cut of She's Got to Have It with whomever else, friends, whatever he'd invited. And it was funny and I went back to my office and I said to my boss who'd met Spike. Spike had come by and visited me at work and I introduced them. I said, This is my friend, he's a filmmaker. Yeah, nice. And then the rest is history on that, but the first four books were tie-ins to his first four films.

Speaker 1:

So they were books about the films?

Malaika Adero:

They were books about the films. Yeah. Actually, the first book was Spike Lee's Got to Have it, and it was the journal, literally the journal, he kept edited as he made the film. And then each book after that had the script in the back, but also firsthand accounts from him on the process of making the film and other people involved with the films.

Speaker 1:

What changed your boss's mind about, because you said you seem different about him? Was it the success of the film?

Malaika Adero:

It was the success of She's Got to Have It because, it's funny, and another exec. So, after Miles and after the Village Voice, this is what actually broke the camel's back in terms of getting me a promotion. So I sign up the Miles book and then I don't know, somebody had gotten wind of me and the Village Voice called me and offered me a position to edit a section of the Village Voice, which to be honest, I would have been clueless. I wouldn't have known what I was doing, but wow, okay. And for a lot more money than I was making at the time. So I went to my boss's office. I said, look, I have this offer from the Village Voice.

I didn't know about parlaying offers to get promotions where you were at. I was just telling him what it was. So he was like, Oh, let me go talk to his boss. And then that's when I got my first promotion. And about this time She's Got to Have It comes out, it's blowing up. And another exec sees me in the hall and says, You should get that Spike Lee guy, and I said I have him. So that's how that happened.

Speaker 1:

Wow. That's amazing. What were some other important books for you to work on during your career?

Malaika Adero:

Oh my goodness. A lot that were important to me, and some of them are more recent, so it's kind of working in reverse, but George Clinton's memoir. I could have retired after that because he's, in my opinion, one of the major cultural figures of our time. So George Clinton's memoir. I did Common's memoir, One Day It'll All Make Sense. I published Pearl Cleage. A non-fiction by her based on her journals. Marise Conde, who I think is one of the best writers in the world and most prolific, for sure. I did three novels with Marise Conde. Tananarive Due and Steven Barnes who are now at the forefront of the Afro-futurism movement. Jewel Parker Rhodes, who's brilliant, accomplished novelist.

In terms of big people, TD Jakes, who sells hundreds of thousands of copies and books. One of the books that's particularly important to me, Susan Taylor's In The Spirit was one of the biggest books

that I published. And that was the inaugural list of Amistad Press, which is where I go back to work with my mentor, Charles Harris who founded Howard University Book Publishing Institute. When he launched Amistad, his independent company, that was our first big bestseller. And that was the book that I had failed to sign up at Simon and Schuster because they didn't get it. One of the things that they said, it was too much of the Godward and that, and I was like, well, that's where Black people are for that. So that was particularly big.

Who else have I worked with? Gosh, it's been scores of people. Blair Underwood. Blair Underwood, Tananarive Due and Steven Barnes actually did a series of novels that are quite wonderful creating this character, Tennyson Hardwick, who was an actor who was down on his luck who is the son of a celebrated Los Angeles cop. And so he turns that into a role playing a private detective. So he did at least four of those books.

Speaker 1:

So you were at Simon and Schuster for a while and then went to Amistad?

Malaika Adero:

Well, this is it. My first job in publishing in New York was New American Library for one year. Then I moved over to Simon and Schuster and I worked there for six years and I'm burned out once again. So I resign and I then publish a book. I got an offer from the New Press to either work or do a book. And I decided to do a book. And it was an anthology on the out-migration from the South called Up South: Story Studies and Letters of the Century's African-American Migration. That was 1992. Charles was just establishing Amistad and preparing to launch it as an independent company and I was the first editor he hired. So I became the executive editor at Amistad Press. So I was there for about five years until the money ran out. And then I began to freelance. I worked with Schomburg to develop a book. So then I go back and work with Howard Dodson on a project. It was called the Black New Yorker, a chronology of Black New York history for 400 years, I think it was.

And then I get rehired at Simon and Schuster. So I was at Simon and Schuster for eight and a half years, but it was six years, then I took an 11 year hiatus of sorts and then went back for 12 and a half more years. Yeah. They were launching a new imprint called Atria and so I went to work with Atria. Yeah.

Speaker 1:

And how long did you work at Atria?

Malaika Adero:

Until 2014, I was here 12 and a half years. Yeah. But I left.

Speaker 1:

And now you, is it freelance?

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, I'm an independent. I work independently. I'm a writer, a book developer and a literary agent. And so I've been away from corporate for four years. In the first year I wrote a long paper for New York public library on black debts. And then following that, I wrote the memoir of Jenifer Lewis, the actress, The Mother of Black Hollywood, which was published in November. And now I actually just delivered the

meanest script for another book of my own called True Names: Four Generations of my Afro-Appalachian Family. Also just before I went back to Simon and Schuster, I wrote the text to a book called Speak So You Can Speak Again, the life of Zora Neale Hurston, working with Lucy Hurston and the family estate. But I wrote that text too.

Speaker 1:

How did you, so it sounds like in some cases you took hiatuses. After Simon and Schuster you stopped and you wrote the book for ...

Malaika Adero:

For the New Press.

How do you balance that now, writing but also working as a lot of jobs, literary agent, book developer? Sorry I forget what the third one was.

Agent and author's representative. So I get people book deals and represent shop deals, book projects. Actually, it's necessary because it's hard to make a living on just one thing. It's extremely hard to be a full-time writer. You kind of have to have a day job. And I love editing, and at this point nearly all of my adult working life has been in publishing. So I continue to develop other people's books. And then agenting is because once you've been an editor and you've been in publishing, so as long as I have.

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:33:04]

Malaika Adero:

You've been in publishing for as long as I have. Somebody's always going to talk you into representing them to sell a book. If you can, you do, it's very hard to do and I'd probably starve trying to do that solely. I wouldn't necessarily enjoy just doing one thing. So I do like the variety and near different areas, but they're all in the same industry.

Speaker 1:

As an agent, do you represent artists in a specific genre or...?

Malaika Adero:

People pitch to me and I read projects, and I go with what resonates with me, and what I think I can be successful with. I have a small client list, but I represent Peter Kimani, who is a Novelist based in Nairobi, Kenyan. The novel is Dance of the Jacaranda, which was published a year before last in February and last year was one of the New York times, on the top 100 list. It's a wonderful literary novel based on the bounding and the building of the Kenyan national railroad. I represent Ron Harris, who is a veteran journalist who happens to also be a professor at Howard and he is the co-author with Matt Horace, a career law enforcement person. Their book is on blacks, black police, and that's coming out in August of this year.

Speaker 1:

So I'll shift a little bit to some more general questions about current state of civil rights. Which I think could certainly overlap with publishing, because I heard you talk a little bit about under publishing of like black writers and sort of the assumption that those books aren't going to sell when research shows that they do. And particularly black women are reading books and buying books. We can definitely sort of

toggle back and forth between the two, but just in general, how do you think the issues have evolved since the civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties? We talked a little bit about this too, in terms of a little earlier about some of the things that were of interest to IBW with meetings to come back around.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, as I was saying. We are kind of revisiting a post-reconstruction era with this administration and the rise of the right wing. I'll just say... Progress and this is one of the bits of wisdom from Babatunde Olatunji. He used to talk about progress not being a steady incline, nor do things steady decline in the reverse, but rather in waves. I am generally optimistic about black people and the world and black people in the world. I think that this is an exciting time and many, many great things are happening, including a tremendous wave of talent and literature. We're sweeping the awards in all the fields of storytelling. Of course film, it's obvious, I think there's been no better time for black film and television in the world.

As far as talent is concerned and publishing as well many more people writing and able to write and writing well. The industry itself has not progressed in diversity inside. You walk down the hall of some publishing companies and they're white as ever. Some of us have better individual jobs, meaning higher on the managerial chain, maybe making a little bit more money. You definitely do see more black faces in support departments and publishing-

Speaker 1:

Support departments.

Malaika Adero:

Maintenance, clerical, non-professional or executive secretaries and that kind of thing. But as far as the people make the decisions about what gets signed, what gets published, what gets promoted, what gets pushed, we have not progressed very much at all. It's good and bad. It's not just one thing, I think that we have... Or for a while it was more difficult to identify, I'll just use an overly simplistic term, to identify the enemy.

Now they're making themselves more obvious, that kind of thing. That's a two edge blessing right there, but we have a lot of work to do. I think that we can be encouraged by, I'm not one of these people who believes that everything good that was done and brilliant work that was done and literature, music, or activism was done in the 70s. I don't think that's the case. We definitely have some new challenges and how to negotiate. Twitter has been our friend in terms of activism, but Twitter obviously is a space where the enemy is alive and well and active, and coming sometimes with new tricks and we have to keep up with that.

Speaker 4:

Can you say more?

Malaika Adero:

Well, one just how we address our own security, financial security. There're are new ways that we can be sabotaged by being hacked. These issues said that Facebook are dealing with. On the other hand, black folk, activist included, we can communicate internationally, without even paying a long distance phone bill. You can produce a book or a publication, the turnaround time is much shorter. There're new

skills you have to learn, that kind of thing. The complexity is that at a time when it's easier than ever for us to get a message out, it's harder than ever to get people to actually read something.

You have to know more than a... If you're going to respond to something in an organized and thoughtful way, you have to read more than a headline. Now we're headline oriented and 120 characters or whatever it is now, 240 characters, just you liking somebody's opinion. Clicking is not a vote for sure. You still have to go to the polls and then you need to register people to vote. And personal interaction, we can't just be yelling at each other across the cosmos. We got to inquire. We sit down. It's interesting. On the other hand, it is easy for us to get to know people in more complex ways. I think about Serena Williams who obviously is iconic and inspirational in tennis, but now in part an advocate for black women's health, and part based on her own personal experience of having a health crisis while trying to deliver her child. And Beyonce actually bringing Chimamanda Adichie, a literary star into the pop culture discourse.

That's fantastic. We'd like to criticize artists, pop artists and all that for not being woke, that kind of thing versus back in the day with Sidney Poitier and Belafonte and all those kinds of things. To some degree they had no choice. Dorothy Dandridge had to pee in a cup in the same venue. She couldn't use the bathroom in the same venue where she was performing. You had to be an activist. Now people can be in their little bubbles and they really don't have to say anything, but some do, not enough, but they do. So, we have to weigh, it's all a balance that we have to aim for.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. So you mentioned, that actually relates to my next question. I was going to ask you about the approaches used by current activists to solve problems. Do you feel it's effective? What more can be done, if there's more?

Malaika Adero:

There's a lot that can be done and in some cases, I don't know what? I don't have an idea, but again social media for example, when you think that Arab Spring and what happened in Egypt. The fact that we could know and we don't have to depend on established media for all of our information. At the same time we need to learn how to be better critical thinkers and knowing what to give credibility to and what not to.

We don't have the luxury of generalizing. We have to be more nuanced in how we think about things and how we express things because our allies don't look and sound one way and our enemies don't look and sound one way. We have to be open to new approaches. I mean, who knew that Brie Newson was going to shimmy up a pole, that anybody can shimmy up a pole, to go snatch down a flag. That flag's been bothering all of us for a long time. Nobody... Well, maybe somebody was thinking about it, but you know what I mean? We have to leave room for greater imagination about how to approach solutions to the problems that we have now. Which is why I believe that Afrofuturism is an important concept that manifestation [inaudible 01:46:05] in the form of like Black Panther are significant. You can't work toward changing a world if you can't imagine what that world looks like.

Now while you're imagining that you have to go take a chemistry class or physics class or something and learn whether vibranium is a real thing or not. Is it vibranium or uranium? You know what I'm saying, that it's the imagination that happens first.

Speaker 1:

What did you think of Black Panther? Have you seen it?

Malaika Adero:

I loved it. Yeah, I have seen it twice. I liked it for that reason. I liked it for them using and inventing things. Creating things, imagining things, but referring to reality. Meaning the language, the South African language that was spoken is actually South African language. Ruth Carter did take the time to do written research and ground her costume design, and some real stuff.

Star Trek was a breakthrough. I was a Trekkie back in the day. So he used the imagination, but he also mixed things up. It's a little bit of this from this culture, a little bit this, a little bit of that. I like it, Black Panther being grounded in for lack of better term, the diaspora and the African diaspora. I think that that is important. Now, that's not the map for the revolution. It is a movie and it did come from comics and from kids step, but who do we better need to reach then kids, young and old kids, that sort of thing. So yeah, I think it was tremendously important. Also, you know what Ava DuVernay is doing, Shonda Rhimes is great.

Speaker 5:

Do you watched the television show Atlanta?

Malaika Adero:

I do and I love it.

Speaker 5:

Do you?

Malaika Adero:

I do.

Speaker 5:

[crosstalk 01:48:33] I know that as a person who lived in Atlanta for many years I was interested in it.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah and what I like about Atlanta, that the show is, it's the closest depiction of my Atlanta reality. Coming up in the... Again I was there from '73 to '84 straight going through college, grad school. Different time, different details, different music. Just pre hip hop. That sensibility dynamic, the dynamic between characters, the sensibility of the characters, that's who we were in the '70s. We were the kid that went to Princeton, but one of the most viable ways of making a living for ourselves is to go find our cousin who had some talent and use what we learned at Princeton to help them do something with his talent. You know what I'm saying? And somewhere in between, we can carve out a life where we can be ourselves and not mold ourselves in the image of what the corporation needs. That's what I like about it. We have kids and formed family the way we have kids in form family. Sometimes it looks conventional, sometimes it does not. Yeah. I do like it.

Speaker 5:

That fascinates me. I didn't think about the possibility that it would speak to your existence. In the '70s and '80s.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, it does. It's like when I was watching this episode recently, what goes on between Ernie and his girlfriend. Some of those conversations, I was like that's me and who my boyfriend was.

Speaker 5:

I felt the same way. When they go to [inaudible 01:50:43] and there she challenges him to the ping pong game and he's like, what's the purpose of this? She's like to prove it I'm tired and I was like, yes.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah, yeah,

Speaker 5:

That resonates.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah. Part of my experience is this story, is my uncle tried to teach me how to fence in the backyard and I'm really wanting to do it, but I was really embarrassed and I didn't want my friends to see me fencing in the backyard, in the black community. How silly is that, but that's the truth.

Speaker 5:

So the ways in which identity is formed and challenged and shaped by the people around you.

Malaika Adero:

He was also the same uncle who was the first one who took me to the political demonstration and who turned me on to James Baldwin and Miles Davis, et cetera.

Speaker 5:

Did you have family in Atlanta when you were living there or no?

Malaika Adero:

I did not. I did not, no we were all East Tennessee, but two of my siblings followed me down there and had kids and raised their kids there. Yeah and now we're back at Knoxville and Atlanta only three hour drive apart. So it's easy for us to move back and forth.

Speaker 1:

Wow. Wonderful, wonderful. I wish I could talk about Atlanta all day, but I should move on. What do you think are the main obstacles in making progress toward racial and ethnic unity?

Malaika Adero:

I honestly don't think about that unity piece much anymore. It's not really, I wouldn't call it as an express goal of mine. If it happens, great. I also try not to... What I want to see are more thinking people, humanitarian people and dependent minded people, critical people, no matter what they look like because I think those people can get something done separately and together. If some of those are white people, great. My main concern is talking to non white people. White people have some healing

to do. That's not our stuff, frankly. If you want my help, you want to ask me something, you're welcome to. You know what I'm saying, but I have no intention of devoting my energy to that.

Speaker 1:

I understand. What about progress toward peace, equity and justice? However you define those terms?

Malaika Adero:

Well, one thing I think is elimination of abject poverty is a must. That's just period. Nobody deserves that. So that's first and foremost. If we do that then the other things I think are easier to tackle. Social justice.

Speaker 1:

How so? How do you feel those things are related?

Malaika Adero:

Well, when people are freed up to be independent minded and humanitarian and thinking for themselves. It removes them from a state of desperation. People don't do well when they're desperate, they don't behave their best when they're desperate. There is just simply no good reason in my mind for poverty to exist in the world. After that, the disparities of treatment and circumstances of women and children. The racial stuff, I don't know. I really think it'll sort itself out, if those two things are taken care of, but race is all woven into the economic peace.

Speaker 1:

Who gets healthcare, who gets advocacy.

Malaika Adero:

How we get our stuff back, how we get our time back, because people are not wealthy and extremely wealthy because you're so smart and they're so organized. They have what they have because it was siphoned off from somebody else. They're benefiting from somebody else's effort, not solely their own. That's got to fundamentally be addressed.

Speaker 1:

Do you think that's possible?

Malaika Adero:

I think that's possible. I do think that's possible. Yeah, I think it's possible. I don't think that our opposition is any more formidable than the opposition was for people who are anti-slavery. If we could do that then... We won that battle, we freed ourselves, not Abraham Lincoln or whomever. I think that we have the same opportunity now.

Speaker 1:

Interesting. How can each of us nurture a positive peach? [inaudible 01:57:27] Today to nurture a positive peach.

Malaika Adero:

I think it's by how we live our lives on a daily basis, how we treat people. I think that's fundamental. Doing on to others and also doing them yourself. Sometimes we do more harm to ourselves and other people, so we have to also think treating ourselves, regarding ourselves. Respect and love and understanding that possibility is ours as well as impossibility.

Speaker 1:

Tell me a little more about that because that actually segues into a couple of other questions. One of which is about self care and how you practice it and how do you advocate that particularly for women of color, but that also kind of touches on hope for the future. So feel free to jump into either one of those.

Malaika Adero:

I think for women, for men, for black people that to live our lives on a daily basis as if we were free and we were on the other side of the battle for social justice. And as much as possible act the way, create the space that you'd create if things were fine because not everything is about money. That could be taking a bath as opposed to just running in and out of the shower. Whatever it means to you. How we eat. I think if we could just move the needle toward us accepting and living our lives in a way that is nourishing to our bodies, as opposed to gratifying some sensual thing that hot wings does for you. You know what I mean?

Speaker 1:

What gives you hope?

Malaika Adero:

Oh, our talent, our genius, our creativity. What gives me hope is walking down the street and see seeing black people look the way we look, sound the way we found at our best. Our creativity, our genius, again I'm hopeful all the time. Kendrick Lamar getting the Pulitzer Prize. It all means something, but it's keeping it in perspective. Something gives me hope on a daily basis.

Speaker 1:

Do you still, because I know that you mentioned that early on in your childhood you were encouraged to dance and to make art and to read and to do all of those things. Do you still dance and do you still paint?

Malaika Adero:

Mm-hmm (affirmative) I dance two or three days a week. I paint, now of course I'm writing parts for a living. I travel. I think travel is very important. I think one of the greatest gifts was one friend of mine, he actually posted this on Facebook. He said, as a suggestion to people for graduation gifts, he said, "Give somebody the \$110 fee for a passport." I was like, yes. If I hit the lottery tomorrow, the first thing I would do is begin to send as many young people in my family somewhere in some other part of the world as possible. Our imagination needs that. Our understanding of the world needs... We need to know that wherever we live, whatever neighborhood, whatever bubble, whatever industry or whatever, that that is not everything.

Speaker 1:

Where have you traveled? What are some of your favorite places?

Malaika Adero:

Let's see now. Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, South Africa, Jamaica, Trinidad, Anguilla, Cuba. Europe too, Paris, London, Zurich.

Speaker 1:

Do you have favorite places to go there?

Malaika Adero:

That's a long list, but they are all in warm places. They're all in black nations. The Caribbean, among my favorite places that I've already been West Africa. Senegal, Ghana. Yeah. I could be there.

Speaker 1:

What's the experience like of being a Black American in West Africa?

Malaika Adero:

A lot of it depends on your attitude coming in and your expectation coming in and your flexibility. No matter where you travel, you can't come with the expectation that things are as you know them. You got to ask some questions, you got to open your eyes. I've had a good experience in most places that I've traveled and I've had strange, awkward moments in probably every place that I've traveled, that kind of thing. But I particularly-

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Malaika Adero:

But I particularly do like, say if I had to really make me answer that, I'd probably say Senegal and Jamaica.

Speaker 1:

What do you like about those places?

Malaika Adero:

Well, Jamaica was the first place I ever went to outside the U.S. And what I like about those places is feeling at home. I feel different. I don't feel foreign. The music is amazing. The people, the vitality of the culture, the food's good.

I haven't traveled anywhere in Asia yet, and I'm looking forward to that, but I enjoy being in Asian communities and having associations with Asian people as I do in the U.S. but I like traveling. I'm more a citizen of the world, even when I'm in junior high school, high school, back in Bearden, back in Knoxville, I thought the idea of the nation state to be silly. I never got borders in countries, and this country is good and this country is bad and this, and then when I went, I could really see, well, some good over here. Some things that I don't like about over here. And there's some things I didn't like about over here, yeah.

Speaker 1:

So a couple of final questions. What do you think of today's views? How would you compare your upbringing and climate?

Malaika Adero:

Well, I love that younger people have more opportunities than ever. They have experiences with like, well, precisely the number of young people that I've met, who've traveled, who are bilingual, multilingual.

The other side of that is young people who can't get out of their neighborhood because of their circumstances or won't get out of their neighborhood because of their sensibility. I think you have both. I think that they, unfortunately, are affected by a kind of coarseness in the culture and the society that affects everybody. I think, meaning that rudeness. It's not that I think people are necessarily more rude, more entitled or, more anything, but they can show it off more, kind of the disputes I have with millennials as they call it and it comes around etiquette, just plain please, thank you, how you doing, that kind of thing, even though I like this whole sharing culture and economy, I think that's interesting. I took a Lyft car over here, so that's cool. The entitlement is a bothersome because that just doesn't help you in the world. We deserve social justice, equal opportunity, all of that, but the world owes us zero.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I worry about that for younger members of my family, the sense that somehow the world is,

Malaika Adero:

And you cannot skip steps just because you can get fame and money without going through the ropes of a particular thing, like learning scales and how to read music. And before you hop up on stage, doesn't that mean that you should.

Speaker 1:

What do you think are the pitfalls of skipping steps?

Malaika Adero:

You don't have longevity. The idea, whatever you're doing is short lived and it's not sustainable. I had, I fell into a bit of an argument with somebody. It was a group of younger people in my neighborhood of the restaurant who meet once a week at a restaurant on my block to talk. And firstly invite, they invited me in the conversation, but I wasn't there for that. I was actually just getting some takeout, but I found myself unable not to get in the conversation when one of the young men, he was in general critical of hip hop heads that say they don't know anything, not smart to spiriting words. And now like generalizing about anybody. Yeah, of course, what he was talking about, I could agree with in some individual cases, but I'm not going to say that about a group.

So then he goes on to say, "well, they know more than the previous generation." And I'm like, "what is he talking about?" And I said, "excuse me, what do you mean by that? I'm curious about what you mean by that." Well, they all know how to do anything. And what he really meant was they're not savvy about technology. Okay. But that's different than they don't know how to do anything. I said, "certain skills are more important in one generation than they are in another." I said, "but there are also certain skills and professions that people don't even have anymore that we could really benefit from. Like knowing how to weld metal, carpentry, all kinds of things." And his answer to that, he said, "well, we can go on YouTube. I learned how to do that. And you can learn a lot from YouTube," but it's not the

same. If I want to be a painter, I can go on YouTube, but I'm not going to pass up an opportunity to be an intern or assistant or in a seminar of Amy Sherald and Kehinde Wiley.

You what I mean? I'm not going to pass up an opportunity when I've been making art, from the time I was a kid off and on, but when I wanted to really get serious about painting, I went to Art Students League in New York and took a class. It's like Nell Painter, she's such a good example. She had this esteemed career in academia. She wants to paint. She went back to school in her sixties or however old or seventies, however old she is. You know what I mean? I liked that, as opposed to now you hop out here, you do something sensational and people like it. But what happens to you down the road? And what happens to you?

I like Walking Dead. For example, the reason I like Walking Dead, is that I like considering it also Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower, Parable of the Talents, because you think about something could happen like in Puerto Rico where the home credit goes down and we don't have any electricity, what are we going to do then? And people who know how to put some wood together to build a house, or know what goes into making a solar panel are going to be the ones who survive and sustain themselves.

Speaker 1:

Great point. If you had a message for [inaudible 00:09:19], what would it be?

Malaika Adero:

Read history. Look back, reflect, really figure out just because you might know who Richard Pryor is, but go back and look at the tapes and, really, really know who you're talking about.

Speaker 1:

How would you define your family right now? Like, what is the difference with your family?

Malaika Adero:

Hmm. I'm lucky in that regard that I have a lot of biological family, nieces, nephews, the children, and my siblings, and in our blood family, they are my family. I'm also fortunate. I have many families, actually I have my biological family. I have my IBW family. I have my family of like-minds where I live in New York, my community in Harlem, and then Atlanta, so it's like overlapping circles of a family and community. And it extends beyond the U.S. Borders. And then that I feel particularly wealthy and grateful and happy and protected in them.

Speaker 1:

I think I have finished all of my questions and some that weren't on there. Some that weren't in the guide, but is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to say or any other subject you'd like to touch on?

Malaika Adero:

No, I can't think of anything. I'm surprised and as much as I thought this'll be short. I mean, how much do I have to say is a lot, but thank you.

Speaker 1:

Thank you. This has been an amazing conversation.

Malaika Adero:

Thank you.

Speaker 1:

Yeah. I'll certainly be in touch and get a copy of it for you. If you have questions about anything, if anything else comes up that you remember, and you'd like to talk about, just let me know. You can do like an AudioAcrobat call. One of my regrets is that I planned to do that with Ms. Daly, but she was sick and she was like, just wait until I feel a little better and that time never came so if anything comes up, I am here. I'm around and I'm happy to talk.

Malaika Adero:

Okay. Okay. Yeah. The only thing I could think of and come up with be individual memories, because the people individually were important in particular ways. Pat Daly, Lerone Bennett who just passed, Vincent, I also don't want to cry.

Speaker 1:

I understand. I was going to ask if you had a specific memory about Pat Daly that you cherish.

Malaika Adero:

Oh many. Oh my goodness. But, thank you. One of the things that distinguished and I'm generalizing a little bit here, the male sensibility and the female sensibility and IBW was two things, an embrace of, let's call it a science, social science, physical science, the male sensibility, and, but not giving in my opinion, enough credence to the metaphysical, but the women, that female sensibility of IBW was there for the most part, particularly packed, and yeah, so that, that's a big thing. You could also look at the gender differences according to, and this is in the general population as well, those who appreciate fiction versus non-fiction male sensibility to non-fiction female, both, that sort of thing. And so you saw that also in IBW.

Speaker 1:

That was specifically, we have Pat offering to give me a reading, but I told her my birthday and she was like, "well, I can't because I was born on December 31st." And she's like, "you are, I can't remember what that I, King of spades Jack of spades, but she was like, "you control the board". So, but I was, I was really interested in, I guess I never thought about the fact that she was, that something that she practiced at IBW, like, yeah.

Malaika Adero:

Yeah well, I've learned and, already was a student of sorts of astrology. And I was always attracted to other religions and philosophies. I have a deep interest in spirituality, no matter how it's expressed. And she fed that and other women, and so IBW fed that and had knowledge that I didn't have, and that we shared. And I cultivated other friendships, people with friendships outside of IBW around those subjects, and issues. Toni Cade Bambara, we talk about the role and the in depth, and the metaphysician and metaphysicians and shamans and that kind of thing. So, yeah. Yeah. They fed my own interest in that and passion toward that.

Speaker 1:

Hmm. Is there one more individual memory you feel like you could share about a different person? You could do Dr. Vinnie or outros.

Malaika Adero:

[inaudible 02:20:13] as I said, I even lived with Lynn for a while and she's the one that I was able to look over her shoulder the most in terms of editing, just actually the craft of editing, which was very important in the way you think about the literature and writing and that kind of thing. And just being a kindred spirit. We traveled, Betty, Lynn and I were in Cuba together, in November. And then Lynn went on with me. We were six of us altogether and Havana for a week. And then Lynn went on with me to Santiago and by bus, by a public bus, a 15 hour ride.

Speaker 1:

Yeah, I read about that.

Malaika Adero:

Oh, right, right, right. So yeah, we have a compatible sense of adventure which is great. And then me being able to, her sharing her sons with me, it was quite wonderful and quite nice. I spent a lot of time with them when they were young and that was great. She, in the end, in Bay Bellamy, oh my goodness. Like I said with, really her being a mentor of sorts, career-wise just by me also looking over her shoulder, not only at IBW, but in her work outside of IBW and her home. She was just such a warrior. And she was very much in touch with her creative side and interest in photography and making art and that kind of thing. And I share that, I had that in common with her, and then there were all kinds of fun and naughty things said, I would say in terms of jokes and conversations and relationships, we all had a lot of fun with each other too. And I'm as grateful for that as I am anything else.

Speaker 1:

Wonderful. Do you feel like your time at IBW shaped your relationships with black women?

Malaika Adero:

Yes, I do. Yes, I do. Yes, I do. I do think the IBW experience expanded and deepened and brought added dimensions to my relationships with women, obviously my men outside my biological family and they had such wide and deep experiences, each one of them to a woman. I mean, Julian, being Jamaican and her experience at work and personal. Yeah. It helped expand my possibility. It helped expand my imagination for what a woman's life can be. That's what I think that it did,

Speaker 1:

Can you say a little bit more about that?

Malaika Adero:

Because they had done so many different things. The Lens' family were activist and, socialist and that kind of thing. Pat had a fascinating background...

Speaker 6:

Whenever you're ready.

Speaker 1:

Okay. I should say this off the record, but what she said during the interview I was at, I asked her a similar question and she was like, "I learned that you don't have to be married to have a baby"

Malaika Adero:

Really? Well, that part I knew already, because that's how I got here. That's funny. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, but Pat. Oh my goodness. Pat was becoming a mother for the first time at 41 or something like that. That deeply impressed me. You get out in the way she looked, we incurred a bikini and having a baby and she's 40 now. I was just so relieved and I'm still relieved that 40 is not what I thought it was going to be. 61, which I am now is not what I thought it was going to be.

Thank you. Thank you, because it didn't mean, you sit down somewhere and you just become somebody's mother and cook, and everybody comes to your house on Sunday, which I don't say that to diminish that, because I think of my grandmothers and the role that they played in that is way over simplifying, the role of that and the importance of that, that Sunday dinner ritual, however, they and her involvement and Snick and all those stories, Oh my gosh, I really wish you could have interviewed her and yeah, they just did things that sisters in Knoxville that I know a lot did not do, that women who rather got that high school diploma, got that good job at the post office, or my aunt's, a bank teller or the local utility board.

And, had some children, had richer lives, but they weren't going off to Vietnam or to China or Guinea-Bissau or wherever doing all these things too. So yeah, I did expand my sites in terms of what you can do with your life as a woman, Eleanor Traylor, you can be an intellectual and wear a fur cape and, big earrings and be dramatic and fabulous and fashionable. And, I remember going shoe shopping with Eleanor and at the time, might've been with us too, Toni Bambara and I was just, you can be an intellectual and love shoes. That's a great thing.

Speaker 1:

Anything else? I feel like we've covered a lot of ground.

Malaika Adero:

I think we've covered a lot,

Speaker 1:

But there's certainly things, I, the things that fascinate you particularly like relationships with women, which I think I had to sort of move away from my family, sort of learn the richness of, I grew up with women who were very werey of other women.

Malaika Adero:

Oh okay.

Speaker 1:

Grew up with that mentality. So I'm certainly fascinated by that. So yeah, we need more to say about [inaudible 02:27:56]

Malaika Adero:

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Yeah, no. In terms of the women in my family, my mother was the baby of 13. She had about five older sisters, five or six. And she was the only one who, she was one of two who ever got their driver's license. She's the only one who drove regularly. I had an aunt Sue. She never went anywhere that her husband didn't take her. So, my mother was the different one, and being the youngest one and somebody said that it wouldn't make sense. People and my family, women in my family didn't travel much less travel alone. They traveled for funerals and weddings and that kind of thing. And none of them had passports or, so I come from that kind of female culture where your life is devoted to other people, you didn't really make decisions to do things for yourself, for your own pleasure and large part. And while my mother set me on the path to thinking differently, the women of IBW just encouraged and magnified that and yeah.

Speaker 1:

Thank you again.

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